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ABSTRACT

This paper examines characteristics of American Indian children, focusing on their similarities with children with learning disabilities. These similarities include: heterogeneity, language problems, concept of time, learned helplessness, locus of control, and discrepancy between potential and achievement. Culturally sensitive prereferral procedures are described, such as not singling out children for individual achievement, allowing more "wait" time between a question and the student's response, and having students draw a picture and then write about it rather than writing first and then illustrating. Culturally sensitive tests and adaptation in testing procedures are then suggested for use if prereferral teaching activities fail. It is felt that consideration of cultural influences will help to differentiate between cultural or linguistic differences and learning disabilities, and thus reduce the possibility of misidentification of American Indian children with learning disabilities. (Contains approximately 65 references.) (JDD)

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Preventing American Indian Children from Overidentification with Learning Disabilities: Cultural Considerations during the Prereferral Process

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A greater percentage (5.28%) of American Indian people has been identified with learning disabilities than other minority groups (Blacks 4.36%, Hispanics 4.14%, Asians 1.66% or Whites 4.14%) (O'Connell, 1987). However, it also has been suggested that many American Indian persons are inappropriately identified with learning disabilities (Latham, 1984.). While recommendations are available regarding overidentification and inappropriate testing procedures for linguistic minority groups , which are believed to be generalizable to American Indian children, (e.g., Figueroa, 1989), much less has been written specifically about American Indian children and psychometric testing.

While standardized testing is employed to determine the existence of learning disabilities, problems in testing American Indian children are recognized (Sattler, 1988). Reliance on standardized tests has been responsible for large numbers of false-positive placements in special education (Chinn & Hughes, 1987). Dana (1984) pointed out that the intellectual assessment of American Indian children is done using tests that are generally inappropriate for describing their intellectual functioning or for predicting their educational outcome. Indeed, Hynd and Garcia (1979) indicated that performance scales might provide an estimate of American Indian children's potential to perform, but verbal subtests predict levels of functioning within English language academic settings.

While inappropriate tests and testing procedures may cause overidentification of American Indian children with learning disabilities, there are also reasons why American Indian people may experience a higher incidence of learning disabilities than other groups. For example, otitis media appears to be related to some learning disabilities (e.g., Bennett, Ruuska, & Sherman, 1980; Reichman & Healey, 1983), and there have been reports of a higher incidence of otitis media among American Indian groups (e.g., Goinz, 1984; McShane & Mitchell, 1979; Paradise, 1980; Scaldwell & Frame, 1985). Early bouts with otitis media among Indian children are associated with later educational problems (e.g., McShane and Mitchell, 1979; Scaldwell, 1989; Thielke & Shriberg, 1990). The well documented high incidence of substance abuse (e.g., Third Special Report to the U.S. Congress on Alcohol and Health, 1978; Trimble,1984) could also contribute to a high incidence of learning disabilities, although the more probale and appropriate diagnosis may be fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol effects.

The possibility of a greater incidence of learning disabilities and the lack of appropriate testing devices and procedures makes it essential, but difficult, to be sure American Indian youngsters are not misidentified with learning disabilities. Some of the reported characteristics of children with learning disabilities are also characteristic of some American Indian children.

American Indian children and their similarities to some of the reported characteristics of youngsters with learning disabilities will be described. Culturally sensitive prereferral procedures will be described. Culturally sensitive and adaptations in testing procedures will be suggested for use if the prereferral teaching activities fail. These cultural considerations help to differentiate between cultural and linguistic differences and learning disabilities and, thus, reduce the possibility of misidentification of American Indian children with learning disabilities.

American Indian Children

The first Americans were once thought to be vanishing, but that did not happen. They increased by more than one million persons between 1950 and 1980 (Bureau of the Census, 1988). Contrary to stereotype, most do not live on reservations. Nor are they all in the northwest or southwest. They may attend school in any community or state. They are numerically among the smallest minorities in the United States, but they are not one homogeneous group. They represent many distinct tribes, bands and nations with separate languages, philosophies, values and beliefs. However, they have been lumped into a catch-all term of Native American or American Indian (Churchill, 1985). Therefore, it is necessary to recognize and emphasize the diversity among American Indian people and between American Indian tribes and reservations.

It is difficult to describe present-day American Indian children without adding to the abundant strereotypes (e.g., Stedman, 1982). Indeed, it has been pointed out that the most prominent feature about reviewing information about the American Indian student in contemporary culture is the lack of information (Lipinski, 1989). American Indian people vary from those persons who have retained their language and traditional beliefs and values to persons who have been assimilated (Bearcrane, Dodd, Nelson, & Ostwald, 1990). Additionally, some are bicultural and able to function with the customs and their own language as well as the language and customs of the majority. While there are language and custom differences among the

approximately 500 Indian tribes and bands identified in the 1980 census (Bureau of the Census, 1988), there are similarities, too. The American Indian population is young with a median age in 1980 of 22.9 years, compared to 30.0 years for the total population. On the average, their families are larger than families in the general population and they are more likely to live in poverty than the rest of the population (Bureau of the Census, 1988). They have not fared well educationally, having the greatest drop-out rate of all ethnic groups. In 1980, 56% of American Indian people aged 25 and over had completed four or more years of high school compared to 67% in the total population (Chavers, 1991). Therefore, there is an urgent need to address the educational needs of American Indian students.

American Indian Children and Children with Learning Disabilities

Heterogeneity. While we will refer to American Indian people, the reader must recognize the heterogeneity among the tribes within the American Indian population. Indeed, there is a great deal of heterogeneity among both American Indian students and persons identified with learning disabilities, but there are also some similarities between reported characteristics of American Indian students and persons with learning disabilities, which contribute to the difficulty of differentiating cultural differences from learning disabilities.

Language Problems. Leung (1990) indicated that young children with linguistic differences are at risk of communication, social and academic problems. Schools may only measure proficiency in standard English, and the youngsters at risk of being mislabeled as language delayed and placed in an inappropriate program and a self-fulfilling prophecy.

There are frequent linguistic differences between many American Indian children and the majority population. The problems of children who speak an Indian language exclusively or whose Indian language is their dominant language may be readily apparent and recognized. However, many American Indian children on or off reservations speak English as their first language, but it may not be standard English. Their problems may go unrecognized. Leap (1991) pointed out there are many varieties of American Indian English, but that many Indian language varieties are characterized by

brevity, imagery, and frequent invitations for listener participation, which may be lost in the businesslike environment of classrooms. To avoid inappropriate or identification or treatment it is essential to differentiate language differences from language deficiencies.

One Crow college student (1991) described his language as follows:

> While I do not speak the Crow language one could not say that I had been an English speaker either. My language was based upon the English language, but was more of language that had been learned by Indians and so it had an Indian flavor to it. My language was "Indian English". "Indian English" was my fault - I live on the Crow Reservation and have grandparents who speak the Crow language, but I chose to ignore my own language and speak a foreign tongue.

While many American Indian students may live either on or off reservations where English is the primary or exclusive language, used there are often language differences which can be traced to having learned the language from persons who spoke an Indian language first. Some of the Indian language "flavor", such as syntactic differences, was learned also. For example, while we would typically refer to "the red house", a direct translation from an Indian language might be " (the) house that is red". Phonetic interference can occur because there are sounds in English which are not used in an Indian language. This can result in substituting a somewhat similar sound in English. Not having personal pronouns in an Indian language can result in referring to oneself as "this person" in English rather than "I" as would ordinarily be done. Some bilingual children do code switching, using some Indian words and some English words which may not be intelligible either to Indian adults who know their language well or their English speaking playmates or teachers. The isolation on many reservations also contributes toward unique and non-standard language usage. Communication is certainly possible, but the use of words and the language are somewhat different, providing opportunity for frequent misunderstandings between American Indian persons and other persons, both of whom are speaking English. Thus, just as there are frequently language problems among children with learning disabilities, American Indian children may have similar problems with standard English.

Time. Children with learning disabilities frequently have difficulty with aspects of time (e.g., Burd, Dodd & Fisher, 1984; Dodd, Griswold, Smith, & Burd, 1985; Forer & Keogh, 1971). Traditionally American Indian people have not viewed time in the same way as people in the mainstream society where time waits for no person. Traditionally American Indian people have waited for people to assemble to signal that it is time for starting an event rather than depending on a clock and a previously specified time to start events.While persons in the dominant society view time as linear, Little Soldier (1989) indicated that American Indian people have viewed time as a continuum with no real beginning or end. Taylor (1991) writing for Navajo educators indicated that time is round rather than linear. It has also been reported that American Indian people have viewed social or familial niceties as more important than keeping an appointment Morgan, Guy, Lee, & Cellini, 1986). Therefore, while it is understandable, some American Indian youngsters have been reported to be less knowledgeable about the time requirements for common activities than other youngsters (e.g., Anderson, Burd, Dodd, & Kelker, 1980; Burd, Dodd, & Grassl, 1981).

Learned helplessness. When persons are put into situations in which they have no control over the outcome of events, they may develop "learned helplessness" (Seligman, 1975). There appears to be agreement that learned helplessness is characterized by a lack of persistence at tasks which could be realistically mastered, but it is an acquired habit of not trying as a consequence of repeated failure experiences (Luchow, Crowl, & Kahn, 1985). Federal governmental policies have forced American Indian people into many situations over which they had no control. In addition, American Indian persons frequently live in circumstances over which they have no control, such as prejudice which is not elicited by their own behavior. They may be placed in schools where the English language spoken is different from their own language whether it is an Indian language or "reservation English". The teachers may exert control over the classroom in ways not understood by the youngsters. Similarly, by definition, youngsters with learning disabilities are expected to perform academic tasks at a level at which they cannot perform.

Attribution. Just as persons with learning disabilities may fail to attribute success to their own effort, American Indian persons have been reported to attribute failure to a lack of ability or effort (Powers & Rossman, 1983). However, effort is volitional, suggesting they may not believe their

effort will result in success. In one study of ethnic differences in locus of control, American Indian people were reported to be more externally controlled than either Hispanic or White people (Graves, 1967). When youngsters do not believe their efforts can affect outcome and if they fail to attribute success to their own effort and ability, the reasonable outcome is a passive approach to learning devoid of strategies to make success more possible.

Discrepancy between Potential and Achievement. To be identified with learning disabilities there must be a discrepancy between potential and achievement. However, a discrepancy between potential and achievement exists for much of the American Indian population. Unless one espouses racist views on the nature of intelligence American Indian people would be expected to produce an equal proportion of very bright children as other groups do. However, even after allowing for a large number of youngsters with fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects and an approximately equal proportion of mental retardation, there is still an excessive number of youngsters who achieve below grade level expectancy (e.g., Boudreaux, 1980; Lin, 1985; Trent, & Gilman, 1985).

Prereferral Strategies

It has been suggested that placement committees erroneously interpret cultural and linguistic differences as deviant, and that the way to reduce inappropriate placement is reduction in the number of inappropriate referrals (Ortiz, A. A., & Maldonado-Colon, E., 1986). Evidence is mounting to support prereferral intervention as an effective educational practice and means to reduce overidentification of children for special education services (e.g., Nelson, Smith, Taylor, Dodd & Reavis, 1991). Since the problems with tests and testing procedures for American Indian children are recognized, it is vital to employ pragmatic prereferral procedures to help prevent overidentification of American Indian children with the stigmatizing label of learning disabilities.

In one study of the prereferral practices of regular teachers, cooperative learning and peer tutoring were reported to be the least frequently used strategies (Brown, Gable, Hendrickson, & Algozzine, 1991), but cooperative learning is recommended as an effective teaching procedure for American

Indian children (e.g., Little Soldier, 1989). After reviewing the literature on cooperative learning for American Indian and Alaska Native children, Swisher (1990) called for more research on cooperative learning and American Indian children, She also reported that there is enough evidence that practitioners should consider classroom organizational procedures that promote cooperative learning among American Indian children. These findings suggest the necessity for the prereferral team to address cultural differences, such as American Indian children's preference for team effort, when they choose and recommend prereferral teaching procedures.

Prereferral Team Composition. When prereferral teams consider American Indian children there should be one person who also is American Indian with a similar linguistic and cultural background as the youngster being considered for the possibility of referral for special education services. There are not many certified special education teachers who are American Indian. However, there are recommendations not to include a special educator among the teacher assistance members because of the possibility of making it easier to recommend special education placement. Since there are often comparatively few American Indian American Indian teachers it may be necessary for non-Indian teachers to serve as the team member who is knowledgeable about American Indian cultures and assures that culturally relevant practices are explored before referring the youngster for special education services. It is also appropriate to invite an American Indian adult who is not a teacher to participate as a member of the prereferral team. They should have an explanation of the reasons why they are serving on the team.However, American Indian people understand the importance of not being singled out unnecessarily and stigmatized with a special education label. Therefore, when they sense that their assistance is genuinely required and respected they are often willing to assist for the good of their fellow tribal members.

Culturally Sensitive Procedures. Unfortunately there has been little research conducted on American Indian youngsters with disabilities. However, we will present procedures which can be considered when prereferral activities are selected which should be considered along with cooperative learning activities before referring American Indian children for identification for special education services.

There is a cadence to language, and many teachers speak at a rapid staccato pace with very little time lapse between utterances or waiting for a response (Dodd, Ostwald, & Rose, 1991). In contrast, when many American Indian people are observed in conversations one fequently notices pauses. These pauses may provide time for reflection to be sure and choose only the right word. However, the pauses may also be used to show proper respect and demonstrate that one is really thinking about the topic or question being asked. One Crow student indicated that the hardest adjustment he had to make after leaving the reservation to attend college was to "learn to talk without thinking".

The time the teacher allows between a question and the response has been referred to as "wait" time. Increasing the wait time has been reported to be effective in increasing the responses of persons from minority backgrounds (Rowe, 1987). This may be particularly true for a bilingual child who must translate the question into his/her first language and then translate the response into English before it is spoken.

On the other hand, many American Indian children are uncomfortable when they are singled out individually. Therefore, to ask a question and pointedly wait while all eyes are on that child would not produce the desired results either. Many American Indian children are group oriented, and they become uncomfortable when they are singled out even for praise. As Hynd and Garcia (1979) pointed out American Indian people have typically been judged by their contribution to the group rather than by individual achievement. It may be appropriate to have teams of children who are presented with a question or problem, who then have time to talk it over before one person responds for the team.

American Indian children may be judged incapable of answering a question when the reality is that the teacher does not understand the social rules governing such verbal exchange. In describing the verbal rules for Utes, (Leap (1991) indicated that questions should be asked when the speaker is confident of the listener's ability to answer the question. To ask a question when it is not known whether the listener knows the answer is to risk embarrassing and insulting the listener.

Sometimes teachers think that American Indian children will not engage in competitive activities, but that is inaccurate. Competition, when it is a group or team effort, is fierce (Swisher, 1990). On the other hand, to be singled out for individual achievement in such activities as spelling bees or

individually competitive activities may result in an unwillingness to show up another student or friend and cause teachers erroneously to judge a child incapable of performing an academic task correctly.

Hall (1976) proposed a paradigm to compare cultures, suggesting that they vary along a continuum in the degree to which their communicative messages are contextualized. For example, if when a person is introduced the person simply says an idiomatic "How do you do?", it may confuse the person to whom he/ she is being introduced, but if the hand is extended at the same time the context is increased and there is greater likelihood of an appropriate handshake. High context cultures do not require a great deal of verbalization to communicate messages, while low context cultures depend strictly on verbalization. Westby and Rouse (1985) reported that mainstream culture is toward the lower end of the continuum while American Indian children are more likely to come from a high context culture. However, most of the language of schools reflects a low context culture, and information is obtained apart from context. The meaning must be obtained from the words alone. Increasing the context within a classroom by such things as adding gestures or demonstrating what is being conveyed verbally may enable some American Indian children to learn better. This helps to underscore the importance of demonstrating or showing instead of just describing how something can be done and using concrete objects which can be manipulated by children. It helps to remember that within American Indian people's own educational system, their methodology included role modeling, apprenticeship training and group concensus (LaFramboise & Rowe, 1983).

Since many teachers have children write about a topic and and then provide an illustration last, reversing the procedure deserves particular attention when addressing cultural differences between American Indian and other children. Many American Indian children would prefer to draw than write or speak about events. Their class notes may be a series of drawings rather than words or sentences to help them remember lectures or classroom discussions. Since they may be more comfortable drawing than talking or writing about an event, it is sometimes helpful to ask them to draw a picture and then write about it. Their drawings also may be used to elicit oral communication.

Since American Indian children may not view time constraints as important, their assignments may may not receive credit because they have not been completed. However, they may simply not know that there is an exact beginning time and expected completion time. Indeed, a deadline may arrive before a child has initiated the task. Therefore, it is important for the teacher to point out the time requirements and to indicate the amount of time allocated for specific events or activities. Because this is likely to be an area of cultural difference, teachers must be careful not to indicate that an imprecise use of time is wrong. It is best to point out that the time requirements in school are precise, without conveying the notion that the way time is viewed within a child's family is wrong.

If the teacher is not sure about whether the procedures being employed are culturally offensive or inappropriate, it may be possible to invite a member of the community in to watch the teaching procedure. That person may be able to identify procedures which are viewed differently within the culture. They may then be able to suggest alternate procedures.

Additionally sometimes youngsters who have been identified for receiving special education services have not been permitted to participate in culturally relevant activities such as participating in learning their own tribal language. While the youngster might be receiving speech therapy instead, the relevance and enthusisasm generated by experiences with their own language are forfeited for the therapy. Needless to say, it would be better to rescedule the therapy and let the youngster experience the culturally relevant activity.

In shop classes presentation of topics such as measuring, fitting, squaring, or squaring are presented in isolation. When the task is presented within the activity of constructing something the concepts are readily understood and then generalized to other construction activities.

One science teacher said that she employed storytelling to present the scientific concepts. She said the story sets the stage, weaves the concept into a larger picture and teaches in context. Traditional stories are used whenever possible with events following a spiral pattern rather than the more linear approach, characteristic of Western thought. They provide the opportunity for interpretation at differing levels, and they are viewed as entertaining and, therefore, more easily and often attended. They further provide for opportunity in synthesizing.

One person working within a school dropout prevention program indicated the value of working closely with parents - even asking them to sign contracts saying they would participate in school sponsored workshops. The same program also has a parent advisory board to make parents know their input is valued and used.

One American Indian teacher pointed out that when she first attended schools she talked with many gestures, including pointing, to make her point clear as had been done in her American Indian community. She said she kept her hands as busy as her mouth. However, when she went to school she was told it was impolite to point. She felt she could have communictated better had she been permitted to communicate the way she had learned at home. She also indicated that she is self conscious about using gestures when she is communicating with non-Indiain persons, but she reverts when she communicates with American Inidan people.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) pointed out that that subordinate minorities develop a sense of collective identity which is oppositional to the social identity of White Americans. This oppositional frame of reference helps to maintain boundaries, and to act "white" is negatively sanctioned. Unfortunately, learning to follow standard academic practices may be equated with "acting white", and academic success may be viewed as a subtractive process. Therefore, to do well in school can be interpreted as acting "white". This makes it essential to assure that the curriculum and textbook materials are not based exclusively on the white majority culture. They also must be selected from among the few written materials which positively portray the real accomplishments of American Indian peoples. Persons from American Indian backgrounds have a rich cultural heritage which they can share through presentations in school. However, teachers must be careful to avoid perpetuating stereotypes or making American Indian people feel they are on display, because such efforts will be recognized as one more attempt to "keep American Indian people in their place."

Identification and Testing Procedures

Not to identify youngsters for special education services when the services are needed is at least as unkind as it is to inappropriately identify them with learning disabilities. Therefore, when none of the prereferral activities are successful, it may be necessary to refer a youngster for special education

identification, which might include the use of standardized tests and procedures. Some possible ways of adapting the testimg procedures and devices appear below.

Lack of Suitable Testing Instruments. Figueroa (1989) pointed out that psychologists have relied too heavily on on psychometric tests in special education diagnoses with pupils from bilingual backgrounds. Indeed, he said that the knowledge base and regulations governing the practice of school psychology are inadequate to meet the needs of Hispanic students with varying levels of linguistic proficiencies and home-language backgrounds. Since there is a much smaller research base on American Indian youngsters, spread over many different cultural and language groups, and few, if any, standardized tests available in Indian languages, it is safe to say the inadequacy is even greater for American Indian students. Typical standardized tests of ability have been developed for and normed on white middle class populations. Therefore, it is not surprising that high scores on standardized tests of intelligence predict success in conventional schools for American Indian students as well as for students in the majority culture (Persi & Brunatti, 1987). Additionally it has also been reported that an American Indian person's lack of a high score, particularly a verbal score, does not necessarily indicate a lack of ability (e.g., Naglieri, 1982). Hynd and Garcia (1979) indicated that performance scales might predict potential to perform, but that verbal scores predict levels of functioning within English language settings. Other studies have pointed out that vocabulary is frequently the American Indian students' lowest score (e.g., McShane, 1980). Certainly low verbal scores are expected when a student is tested in a second and non-dominant language. Similarly, students whose first language is English but non-standard English may be penalized as well.

An obvious solution to the problems would be to devise tests and procedures specifically for American Indian populations. However, the large numbers of tribal groupings and differences in levels of acculturation make that a complex undertaking. McShane and Plas (1984) pointed out that a comprehensive theoretical model of American Indian functioning would need to incorporate otitis media history and hearing acuity, oral-linguistic and nonoral-visual normative behavior patterns, differential neurological functioning, variation in learning styles, acculturation factors, tribal membership and reservation location, age and sex, as well as achievement-intelligence relationships. Since test companies must make money, it is doubtful if they

could be persuaded to develop such complex and numerous testing systems with potentially very small sales potential. Until appropriate tests and testing procedures become available, it seems inadvisable to use standardized tests if it is possible to avoid them. However, possible adaptations and alternate procedures are described below.

Cultural Insensitivity. Chamberlain and Medinos-Landurand (1991) described four problems cultural insensitivity cause. There can be assessment which leads to inappropriate test interpretation, ranging from inappropriate norms to different role expectations of test takers and test givers if cultural differences are not considered in the assessment process. They indicated that there may be misperceptions between the teacher or evaluator and the culturally diverse students. Such misperceptions could be responsible for inappropriate referrals, test interpretations, and even placement in special education. They also indicated that cross-cultural stereotyping can result in interpreting culturally appropriate behavior as an inappropriate behavior or even an inability. Miscommunication may also result with the possibility that testors and teachers may convey something far different to the youngsters or parent than they intended to convey.

Assessment Adaptations and Overcoming Bias. Chamberlain and Medinos-Landurand (1991) pointed out the necessity of learning about a child's cultural and linguistic background and attending to the potential influences on assessment. The student's level of acculturation to the mainstream society needs to be assessed to determine how well the youngster will adapt to a testing situation. It will be necessary to determine cultural variables such as cooperation versus competition which will affect the test performance. For example, traditional Indian students may feel uneasy being singled out and exhibiting individual rather than group prowess. It is also necessary to determine the youngster's dominant language. Often the bilingual youngster should be tested in both the dominant language and English. Obviously correct responses elicited with either language indicate the possession of the knowledge, skill, or ability. Unfortunately, few testors are able to speak Indian languages necessitating the use of interpreters. Interpreters are also likely to value sharing and the group and unwittingly assist the youngster yielding inaccurate estimates of capability or achievement.

Local Norms. Local norms can be established which permit youngsters test results to be compared with other persons of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. However, it is essential to recognize that psychologists who are unfamiliar with the cultural expectations of the youngster being tested may fail to elicit knowledge, understanding, or skills.

Non Testing Procedures. It may be necessary to rely primarily on observation to determine whether youngsters lack ability. If a youngster functions within the community, and can perform verbal and understand and carry out the requirements for various other tasks as well as most youngsters of the same age in the community with the same language, it may it is reasonable to assume that the child has similar abilities. Because many Indian cultures are inclusive and cooperative, it may be misleading to just assume the youngster is capable of carrying out the same tasks just because he/she is part of the group. It may be necessary to ask the child to perform the specific task or wait for an opportunity to see the task being performed.

Respect and Inclusion

Finally, it is recognized that many standard school practices have not worked well with Indian students. One reason is that American Indian people have traditionally maintained a great respect for individuality and the uniqueness of each individual. Good Tracks (1973) pointed out that any kind of intervention is contrary to American Indian people's adherence to the principle of self determination or non-interference. He said that American Indian society would not allow interference or meddling even if it is designed to keep another from doing something foolish or dangerous. Nearly all agencies which have come into contact with American Indian people have done just that - attempted to change Indian people to make them more like non-Indian people to save them from the "folly" of their own ways and beliefs. Clearly all schools - not just Bureau of Indian Affairs Boarding Schools - have attempted to diminish "Indianness". That may help to explain the limited success of psychologists, including school psychologists; social workers, including school social workers; counselors, including school counselors and other "helping" professions when attempting to work with American Indian children and their families. When a child is considered for special education, American Indian parents may perceive it as motivated by racism or an attempt to reinforce stereotypical beliefs that American Indians are unable to perform well academically. American Indian people have viewed all

persons and others who inhabit the world as being related and equally important, which has resulted in respect for individual differences. Oren Lyons, a member of the Onandaga tribe was quoted on a discussion of natural law saying, "You have to respect life - all life, not just your own. The key word is respect." (Wall & Aren, 1990, p.67). Being singled out and removed from the larger group even for special services may be viewed as lacking in respect for an individual. Indeed, the thought of intervention with special education services may be seen as singling out a child and viewed as offensive to the family. Available services may be appreciated, but imposed services may be viewed as unwelcome intrusion.

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